



SPEECH BY
THE VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRESIDENT, PROFESSOR RAJESH CHANDRA
AT THE GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON 13 APRIL 2012
AT THE LAUCALA CAMPUS, SUVA, FIJI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND GREETINGS

His Excellency the Governor-General of the Solomon Islands and Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, **Sir Frank Ofagioro Kabui** and **Lady Grace Delight Kabui**;

Hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji Islands, Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, and Mrs. Mary Bainimarama;

Hon. Minister for Education, Mr. Filipe Bole;

Deputy Chair of Council, Mr. Ikbal Jannif;

Government Ministers;

Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Heads of International and Regional Organisations;

Council and Senate Members;

Graduands and their families and friends;

Colleagues and Members of Staff;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome, Ni Sa Bula, Namaste and a very good morning to you all.

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this graduation ceremony and have the privilege to address you on this special occasion. I thank you all for your presence here today to recognize and honour our students on their achievements.

I would like to especially welcome the Chancellor, His Excellency the Governor-General of Solomon Islands, Sir Frank Ofagioro Kabui, and Lady Kabui, to this graduation ceremony. It is also a privilege for us to have the presence of the Honourable Prime Minister of Fiji, Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama and Mrs. Mary Bainimarama with us this morning. Thank you very much Prime Minister for gracing this special occasion.

GRADUATION CEREMONY

Today's ceremony is one of the largest USP graduation ceremonies with about 1447 students from 19 different nationalities receiving certificates, diplomas and degrees:

- 55% of all graduates are females and the vast majority of the medals and prizes recipients are also female;
- 33% will receive Postgraduate qualifications;
- and 15 graduates are from non-member countries including six (6) from Papua New Guinea.

TO THE GRADUATES

Let me say to all those graduating today: you are the lucky ones; you are the cream of the Pacific; and you are the hope of the Pacific. Many of you will become leaders in politics, commerce and in the community—and I am confident that all of you will make very worthwhile contributions to your families, countries and the world.

Let me also take this opportunity to remind you graduates that you must continue to learn and better yourself. Success is a journey, not a destination. Receiving your certificates, diplomas, or degrees today does not signal an end but rather the beginning of a long journey—I have often said at graduation ceremonies that it is what you do, and how you do it after graduation that will determine your success in life.

As you walk across the stage and receive your award, you start at that end as a student, and leave this end as an alumnus. I invite you to continue your interest in your University, actively participate in alumni activities and stay connected as we all join hands to contribute to the development of our countries and the Pacific region we call home. Make the University proud by being hard-working, innovative and committed. Be ethical in your future work, lead a life of meaning and impact, and be willing to make a difference. These should be the inspiring elements of the **USP brand** of which you will all be ambassadors.

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

I am pleased to report that the University continues to make significant progress and is reforming and transforming itself with vision, passion and energy into an even higher quality, more relevant and sustainable university.

This year, our student enrolment has increased by 16 percent, which is a recognition of the quality of our programmes and the value that USP delivers;

The Second Phase of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre with its state-of-the-art Multipurpose Lecture Theatre was opened by the Honourable Prime Minister of Fiji and the Japanese Ambassador on 22 February;

Aid to the University increased by 17 percent last year and we are hopeful of further increases this year and in the future;

Member countries and other stakeholders retain their confidence in the University and despite the hard economic times, all member Governments have been making their contributions;

The University continues to show improved financial performance, with better than budget performance in 2011;

We have begun work on the next Strategic Plan covering 2013-2018 with the theme of transforming USP from a good to an Excellent university and which will lead us to our Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2018.

The Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR) has made good progress with a new undergraduate degree structure and the implementation of the Credit Points System to start in 2013;

- We implemented two new undergraduate Programmes in 2012 - Bachelor in Engineering (Mechanical) and Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical & Electronics);
- Improvement in senior staff recruitments – we now have 30 Professors instead of the 11 in 2008; and
- Proposals for the development of the Lautoka campus and the development of additional student accommodation will be considered by Finance and Investments Committee next week.

As most of you know, Sir Frank Ofagioro Kabui is our 18th Chancellor and today's ceremony will be his last official engagement as Chancellor because his term will end on 30th June 2012. I wish to record the University's sincere thanks to the Chancellor for what has been an outstanding term in office over the past twelve months.

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, your participation in all our graduations since your installation—here at Laucala, and in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa is testimony to your interest in the welfare of the University and wholehearted support for the University of the South Pacific. We have appreciated very much your guidance and support that has resulted in the recent decision of the Government of Solomon Islands allocating land for the development of our new campus in Honiara.

The development of the new campus is one of the most important developments for the University, and will bring to fruition the long-standing plans of both the Government and the University. Even though your term will end, we will continue to seek your wise counsel in moving this unique and valuable institution forward.

CONCLUSION

Please allow me to thank all the USP stakeholders for their faith in the work that the University is undertaking – with this strong and steadfast support, our tasks have been made easier. I wish to especially acknowledge the good work of my Senior Management Team and of the staff of the University.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, a final word to the graduands – Congratulations to you all, and I wish you the very best in the future. Today you celebrate your achievement; but you also start another journey. The future is what you make of it and much is expected of you; Make USP proud by your contributions.

Vinaka Vakalevu; Dhanyabad; Thank you.